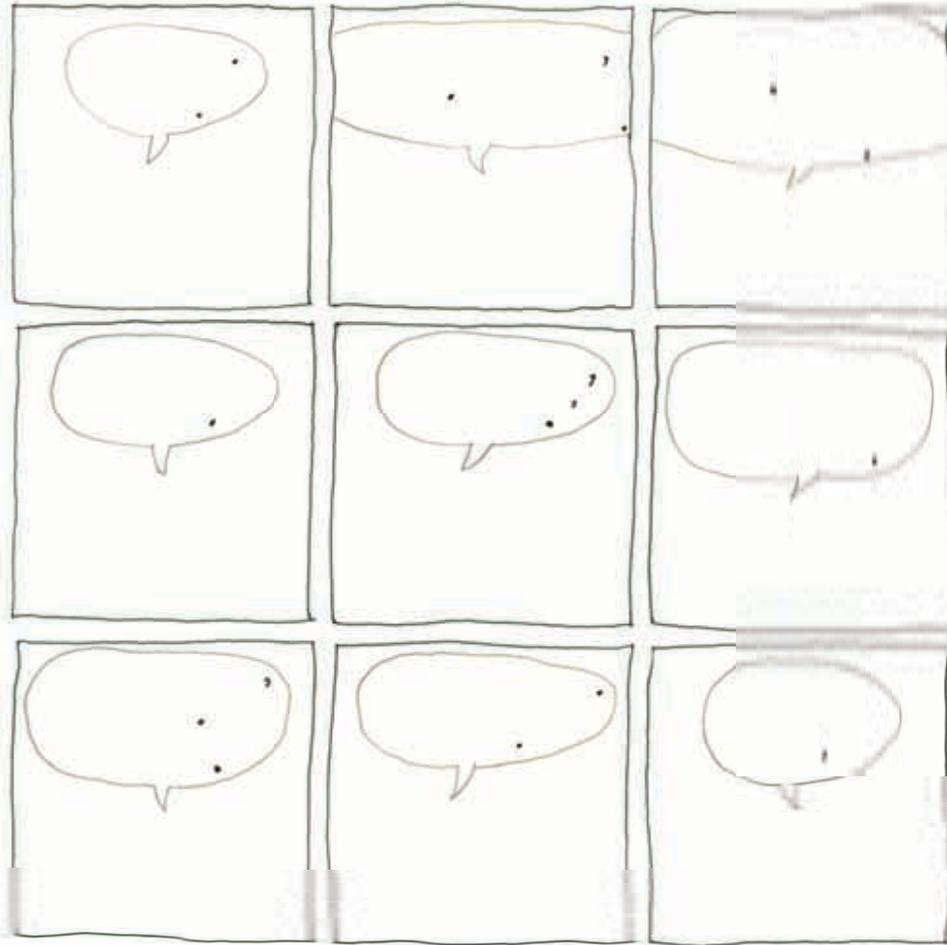


WordsFestZine

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Introduction

Welcome to WordsFestZine, an ‘instant’ publication born out of a partnership among Words, Poetry London, and Insomniac Press. Our goal with this zine was to capture the energy, dynamism, and diversity of Words Literary and Arts Festival by putting together a collection of reactions and responses to the festival, while it was happening. Our call was simple: Visit the Festival. Write About It. Get Published. We asked festival goers and our esteemed writers to send us poems, twitterverse, creative non-fiction and fiction pieces. These are not works “recollected in tranquility” — indeed, the ink may still be drying as you read this preface.

So how did we pull this off? With a team of tireless editors and producers working around the clock to edit, compile, design and, finally, print the zine within 24 hours of receiving the final submissions. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the participation of the public: this is London’s WordsFest; this is London’s WordsFestZine.

We have divided the WordsFestZine into 3 sections: “Happenings and Responses,” “Poetry OutLoud,” and “Heterogeneities and Rhinos.” The “Happenings and Responses” section contains pieces responding to and involved with events at the festival. “Poetry OutLoud” contains poems that were performed at the open mic night at the festival. And the “Heterogeneities and Rhinos” section contains the oddments and tidbits that collect around a major literary event.

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Happenings and Responses

War of the Words Lincoln McCardle

The clicks of the keyboard cease
replaced with a collective yawn.
The writing instruments stretch and the thin
sheets sit unmolested and reflect.
Silence echoes.
Then a slow wave of quiet yet discordant
sounds:
Sighs of amusement, the clinking of glasses,
tittering, twittering and airings of delight.
The almost-palpable inactivity of marking
coherent words on paper and the
composition of text.
Suddenly a debate is sparked and an
imagination ignited.
It is a celebration of the inkwell and may the
ink be well celebrated!

Panel of Thought Stefanie Tom

Intelligence embraced itself on the stage,
Meaning personified, in words
Travelled through the vibrations,
The black and white of the world was torn to
shreds,
And in place, varying and wide hues of grey
formed.

As the authors spoke, the chapters of life
were illuminated.

The twinkling of truth laced and looped
around their tongues.
And their messages:

You cannot reduce a person into a category of
bad or good,
Writers are carpenters and words are their
wood,
Light peeks its way in through our cracks,
Grey is much more realistic than white or
black,
No matter how steady you are, gravity will
still make you fall,
And most importantly, life's about the
moments: make sure to seize them all.

The Circus is in Town Frank Beltrano

I have run off
often to the circus
am circled now
by magicians
bareback riders
jugglers of balls and knives and fire.
Some say
it is just a word game
to which fools aspire
but I lust to be circled
by the circus folk
'til my pen
of many colours
expires.

“Home is where everything is green.”

— Heidi Choi

Green Heidi Choi

I think back to the place.
With a green yard
Green door
Green garage
Green sofa
And a green mural across the wall of the
parlour,
My parents' home stands tall and still.
It hasn't aged a bit –
Unlike all of us, who have.
My flat is my leverage
The alibi that I carry in my back pocket
Bragging rights
About being a grown-up
Up, up, up
The elevator takes me up
To the floor
And down the hall I go
To the door
“363”
I call it my apartment, but not
Home.
They say home is where your heart is,
But my heart is here,
(It moves in sync with campus conundrum)
But it's not my home –
Not yet, anyway.
Home is where everything is green.
But I remember
I signed up for adulthood.
The alibi in my back pocket
Tells me that the safe house

That I grew up in
Shouldn't still be “my” home.
Adulthood is a world of documents and
signatures.
Now, the green place is my “parents' house.”
Every time I leave
My “parents' house”
I wish I could stay longer
To relish and revel in
That greenness
That years ago I thought could be replaced
With a greener green
On the other side
After moving out of “my parents' house.”
Maybe my contract should have warned me
in fine print:
Not a smidge of the apartment,
None of it will be green.

We brought our beloved books Aileen House

We brought our beloved books, our easy
familiarity, our own best words to the corner
in hopes of sharing our joys, labours and
pleasures. I didn't think about the notion of
an us – readers and speakers – and a them –
listeners and critics. I didn't think about the
privilege or the gifts. As the young man
watched and heard, his hunger became
obvious. Here is a man hungry for ideas,
hungry for conversation, hungry for
community. And to our potluck table he
brought the magic. And we became us in the

“Celebrate the local authors who enrich our city because they MUST write just as they must breathe.”

— Kym Wolfe

process of moving closer to hear a voice unfamiliar with speaking to the spaces in the crowds. We became us in the gentle aid of pronunciation and diction. Today, courage is a dog-eared paperback in the front zipper pocket of a backpack. Never doubt that there is hunger and community. Never doubt that your pot is full, that you always have something to give and something to receive. There is always time, and an abundance of gratitude.

Local Authors Book Fair Kym Wolfe

Book Fair. Book Fare. Nibble on novels, juicy romance, meaty mystery. Poetry to please the palate. Autobiographies to whet the appetite. A handful of horror, a dash of drama, a cupful of conflict. Medieval to modern day. Sci-fi and fantasy simmer beside sport and social commentary. A full menu of disparate dishes, using the simplest of ingredients: WORDS. Sliced and diced, stewed and brewed, stirred and shirred, caramelized and crystallized. From-scratch creations that tantalize the tastebuds and leave you hungry for more.

Celebrate London! Celebrate the local authors who enrich our city because they MUST write just as they must breathe. It is a part of the DNA, an inborn yearning that pulls stories through hands and keyboards

until they spill onto the written page to be consumed, savoured, chewed over and digested.

Aromas drift up from the food stalls below reminding me I must feed my rumbling belly. But my mind – ah, my mind – has been sated with ideas, emotions, fact and fiction. Listening to local authors read what they have concocted – that has been the true feast.

In London Town Ola Nowosad

in London town
poets stand
at Covent Market
poems in hand and in our voices

words fly like leaves, golden,
livening autumn mindscapes, red
torches being passed down

one from a hundred years ago,
McCrae’s remembered verses
on war’s bloodiness and loss

many battlefields, many wars later
still we bleed and still we mourn
and still we write

sometimes on war or on longed-for peace,
we wonder what it will take to wake
the world to stop its brutal killings

“and some are intimate, and some are imaginary friends”

— Megan Gerrett

our words spoken aloud today 
hover briefly, warrior-like
falcons in November wind

our written words wind on the page
like refugees lined up seeking home
propelled by hope
we read of red poppies, red roses, epic
pomegranates and ripe apples

the personal becomes the poetical
the political becomes the poetical

transformed are we by words
the chaos and beauty of language:
the desire to feed and feast on words
Wordsfest

Character Talk **Megan Gerrett**

Kids sitting in the aisles,
excitement in the air,
faces—everywhere, everywhere
voices in the air.

But I don't hear
anything exclusive, I don't feel
like I'm not allowed here.

I see pens scribble, and it's a different
atmosphere

like when they talked of books
and going—going there.

We don't have to explore ourselves
if it's more comfortable in an
empty, wooden chair.
But I like the discovery

of characters when they
take on a new life;
and some are intimate,
and some are imaginary
friends.

Do they know us?
am I *God* to them?

Wearing the T-shirt **Laurie Graham**

All day, *words*
banding chest,
bright font on dark
shirt, the unending of
words assessed, right
words for wages, the
bright false ones,
the ones uttered quiet
and phony to the cashier,
have you tried our
[insert words] on sale
this weekend, never mind all these
syllables, the clattering
language of traffic jam,

“A reading is special because a group of people have gathered to experience writing as a group. Nothing more is necessary.”

—Zoe Norman

of call-in show, of
excused absence, words gone
until you step into the field,
the abandoned squash
set to rotting in the
coherent mud.
Turns out here’s
the place you need not
speak when spoken to,
though you want to now, here you want
to say, Look, would you look,
these gourds make the perfect
punctuation.

**Some writers read their work in a way that is
bizarre to me**
Zoe Norman

I didn’t notice this until I started attending readings, but some writers read their work in a way that is bizarre to me. They-string... their-words-together... in-a-totally-unnatural-way. I don’t know why they do this. Does anyone read like that naturally? Does anyone think like that? Beyond anything, it is incredibly distracting. It takes me a few minutes to get beyond how they read in order to actually pay attention to the content. I wonder what prompts them to read that way. Do they think it adds weight to their words or power to their phrasing? It is much braver for a writer to read their work in a natural way, to not hide behind a performance. If a writer is

honest with their delivery, it makes their words more real, truer. It is representative of their braveness, to read their words as they wrote them, to not contort them to suit an idea of how a writer should sound. A reading is special because a group of people have gathered to experience writing as a group. Nothing more is necessary.

fem-i-nism
Megan Gerrett

Definition: women should have
equal rights to men

I’m not a radical monster; that’s not how it’s meant

A “known feminist,” as though it’s a crime
challenging society, and standing against
false advertisement

Feminist
it’s a nice word; let’s all put our hands up
because thirty years ago, things were different
and yet, much the same

Let’s end the suspicion; I’m not against you
I’m with you, for you
and equality, diversity

I know that we are strong
and I hope we will persist
in case you want to know, yes
I’m a feminist.

“This November air Is made of soliloquies Along Dundas Street”

— Jennifer Zhang

Take-aways

Roy Geiger

She said one tough mother said an idle day, a
waste

She said a magnifying glass shows the
beating heart right through the shell of a
snail, anyway

She said all her dreams are still in the house
where she grew up

He said criminal secrets will out we are born
knowing right from wrong he said

He said fiction almost hides the secrets
spelled out in nonfiction

He said story is a dream state

She said fiction is one big book her life story
over and over again

Friday Night Festival Pulse

Marilyn Ashworth

Chatter, a sea of rolling words from people
in:

bow ties, suit ties, jackets, jeans, sweaters,
scarves, necklaces, skirts, caps, slacks,

poppies, Movember 'staches,
cotton blends, colour clashes,

ladies, gentlemen, bald, crop, mop, troupe?

video cameras, cell phones surfing,

hugs, laughter, pointing finger, whispers, note
jotting

mic testing, last minute preparations,
questions, answers?

old friends, introductions,
young, old, exclusive, inclusive,
Zolf greeting, noise fading
Museum London, opening night reception,
WordsFest begun.

Haikus From a Street Corner

Jennifer Zhang

This November air
Is made of soliloquies
Along Dundas Street

Though our feet wobble
Atop overturned milk crates
Our voices do not

Boldly spoken truths
Shake the heart of the city
Inspire the rest

a pointwise stroll (amongst the stars)

Helen Ngo

tonight, i walk to the edge and dare to look
not down, but up

and i find that i have come further than i
could fathom

so tonight i find myself contemplating the
world in polar time

hanging on a horizon lit by the measure of a
parameter

“an Other - silent
like a foot
in the boot of white boys
who speak History”
— R.A. Robinson

just beyond the reach of our
comprehension—
comprehension in all of its finite, curious
glory.

and as iron sharpens iron, so we will too
as we tumble through this rabbit hole of
wonder
vast enough to hold the universe in its pocket
(and then some, because who measures the
infinite?)
a universe so big i could never pinpoint the
north star—
the one guiding all of our (extra)ordinary
hearts.

chemical imbalance, in (way, way over) my
head
sparking obvious midnight chances set
against a backdrop
of telescoping ideas in n-dimensional space
space that could not be contained by the
greatest atlas
space containing the lion-shaped
constellations of our souls
and the thunderous hummingbird-song of our
heartbeats.

Unborn Not Here
R.A. Robinson

Last night, he spoke of Steve Biko
standing before a small crowd of white boys
ribs-split, sitting with mouths wider than

specks of spit
suspended and pass books spread like legs of
black mothers
flapping to fly from homes
soaked in Soweto Riot scares - another black
born -
another - unborn -
an Other - silent
like a foot
in the boot of white boys
who speak History,
meeting Steve Biko
unlike nameless, rib-punctured unborns.

**A landmark jutting prominently from the
linoleum expanse**

John Malik

A landmark jutting prominently from the
linoleum expanse;
sweet, crisp, and warm.
The architects began to plan;
the builders began to build.
Crumbs and stones and hair;
the elbow grease of a thousand workers' six
thousand limbs.
“A home,” they said.
Deposits of blue succulence, lakes of sultry
resin.
When it was finished, it was enjoyed.
The colony was united in a vivid sense of
purpose.
“For generations to come,” they said.

**“A landmark jutting prominently from
the linoleum expanse”**

—John Malik

A yawn and a half open eye
spots a tasty treat.
Whiskers bristle as the workers bustle
underneath;
the shadow encompasses, engulfs.
The feline enjoys a breakfast snack.

Poetry OutLoud

Writing in Snow

Martin Hayter

I write in sky blue ink:
march my words
between the lines, overcast,
paging what comes to mind
amid a chaos of slow
soft bombing that tries
to whiteout my rhymes,
rhymes that also lay claim
to this page where both,
in silence, have a war
to wage with silence.

Anna Behind Bars

(imagining Anna Akhmatova)

Martin Hayter

Naked, she scratches poems
with a splinter from a bedpost
on a bar of soap and rubs them

into her skin, into memory,
and, as she comes clean slowly,
the words wear down, fading,

leaving a white slate as clean
as her body the guards inspect
each day for contraband, as she

razes their suspicions once
more, with her silent smile, dry
as ink, a withering critique.

In hollow streets

Joan Clayton

In hollow streets the poets flow
Between the pillars row on row
That mark our place while in the sky
The word gods blinding writing cry
Scarce heard amid the drone below

Guerilla, a member of an irregular armed
force that
fights an organized group

Or a large hairy animal

Words wordy a wordy play on words

If you do not feel this love of words pulling
you like a river
If you do not feel this pull

Then sleep on, sleep for those of us who do

We are the bards short days ago
We wrote in cloistered cells felt fear
For those who weep and now we write
On city walls step up the pace

The poet hears silence, finds eternity in a
single word
Enters by the front door, the back door and
the chimney

A gorilla eats a lot of bananas and is
preverbal

“this deck near Sparta where winged symphonies strut”

— Shelly Harder

Take up our quarrel with the foe
To you with trembling hands we throw
The pen; be yours to hold it high if ye break
faith

With those who march we shall not sleep
As poets flow in hollow streets

A wordy play on words, Bring Your Own
Guerilla/Gorilla suit . . .

plastic blossom Shelly Harder

in backyard suburbia
squirrels frenzy in shrubbery
leaves scrap
with the last scraps of a bag
caught in a tree

other bits of wrapping
lie with the leaves mulching the beds
a sterile coupling

not so this deck near Sparta
where winged symphonies strut

where, buried in birdsong
morning forgets the honk of buses
and the stampeding feet
the faces furrowed too soon

rather, to languor in the sun
and quite forget what they on branches
and on water have never known

here where bags have never stabbed the air
where fast food wrapping have not slouched
where sirens have not stormed to quell a
beating

but I return, oh city, city
and your leaves are dancing with the plastic
let loose to bloom and wither before the sun

Poem: A Forgotten Library (remembered only at exam time)

Sara Raza

Cramped identical square desks are packed
like sardines,
surrounded by tall towering shelves crowded
with volumes of novels.
Thousands.

Air reeks of fresh print on paper mixed with
a tang of acidity and the scent of grass.

Worn walls are only decorated with cracks
and stains.

Lights are dim, illuminating only the corners
within.

Wastebasket is overflowing with crumpled
paper, lost ideas, incomplete thoughts.

A comfortable silence...

that is only broken with occasional deep
exhales and pregnant sighs.

Teenagers are wrapped in a corner engulfed

“All of us mistook it for some sort of Heaven.”

— Stan Burfield

in textbooks.
Bulging backpacks bulking with belongings
weighing down poor backs as they earlier
walked class to class.

Their growling stomachs begin pleading as
they write...
They turn to glare at the sign hung at the
snack bar,
and the big red letters glare back, “closed.”

Faces pained with concentration. Eyes
drooping heavily.
Hands stained with ink. Heads burdening
their necks.
While sitting on this rigid torturous chair,
their thoughts skip to escape as
they dream about soft pillows with memory
foam that tailor to their carefully crafted
backbones.

Meaningless noise as the microphone turns
on –
“closing time”.
Desperate teenagers leap out of their stations
as
smiles break open as they exit.
Sweet home.

Then I Saw the Vatican **Stan Burfield**

All of us mistook it for some sort of Heaven.

We paid our fees and streamed in,
and by the thousands poured down the
heavenly halls,
glimpsing, above the churning river of our
bodies,
gold, enthroned Madonnas done in oils,
frescos of classical motifs, with cherubs
looking on,
Popes in robes, surrounded by angels,
all proclaimed under high arches
held aloft by Roman columns,
each inch worked
to the highest art, but we were always pushed
on,
our tour guides somewhere calling,
and if I could just stop
and absorb all this
I might think of a prayer or at least a good
thought. But no,
under that grand girth of power and glory
we were ground down like polished stones.

Then I discovered this small painting
by a little-known artist named Crespi
in the old, neglected Castle Saint Angelo.

Alone, in a silent inner room,
I stood for a long time,
just inches from the face
of a man worshipped for two millennia,

“They say, Play poetry backward and you can hear sinister voices.”

— Andy Verboom

ever since the long moment of horror
he was living through
there in front of me.

I was held by his unhurried eyes.
They accepted
the armoured brute
who was forcing him forward
amid splashes of blood-red spray
into the room
I was in.

The Loosed Tongue Andy Verboom

They say, Play poetry backward
and you can hear sinister voices.

Just imagine the flames crowning
such a world, their giant fingers of smoke
jabbing for more.
The poets run
like wild dogs, their noses everywhere,
but they're caught and burned
in mounds of their books.

The loosed tongue leaps like a fish
from its chains.

The globe swings like a censer
from its chains.

The loosed tongue leaps like a fish
in mounds of their books.

But they're caught and burned
like wild dogs, their noses everywhere,
jabbing for more.
The poets run
such a world, their giant fingers of smoke.

Just imagine the flames crowning
and you can hear sinister voices.
They say, Play poetry backward.

Who praises silence? Jennifer Chesnut

Who praises silence, who praises the air?
The moon held between heaven and earth by
an invisible hand
The river rubbing her body on the bank
The cat captivated at the window
The bird popping up beak first at daylight
The body in sleep, the head on the pillow
The lovers rocking in and out of the night
Who praises silence, who praises the moon?
Martin Luther King begged the pause to open
people's vision
Gandhi held fierce to the quiet path to reclaim
a nation
Aung San Suu Kyi went present into house
arrest
and years later returned the same
Maude Barlow's words struck like lightning
into silence, into certainty
Before the alarm sounds, before the gates
close, silence enters
Her magnetic fingers pull us into a new room

**“Before the alarm sounds, before the
gates close, silence enters”**
— Jennifer Chesnut

What will she say next in the space where no
one is speaking
What will she beckon forth from you, and
soon?
Sun setting over Tibet
Baby’s first breath
Last leaf falling before the full freeze
Who praises silence?
On these loud shores, who praises the moon?

Heterogeneities and Rhinos

Palms as Poems Jayme Archibald

I like to think of my palms as poems
or perhaps, my poems as palms
as I hold them both, hands up
in offering
begging for you to take them by the handfuls
grasping them with your own
poems, palms
palms, poems
I blow them in kisses
so another may hold them gripless
letting them slip to the sky
fingerpainting the framework
that pillars the planet
presented in feather light
poems, palms
palms, poems
I breathe them in doses
healing myself in the powdered pressure of
poems, palms
palms, poems
to my wounds, cleansing and mending
in the touch of words, these
poems, palms
palms, poems
in offering, as I hold them both
for you to kiss and breathe and mend
as well

Heavy Metal Rhino Andy McGuire

A protagonist of
five o'clock light, I hear
rumours of November,
the Norway of the year,
all my puny wounds
dressed for the weather.

rail trail ride Marlene Laplante

riding on the line
sunlight filters through the trees
each pedal seems in time with the past
or the clatter of a ghost train on the track
wheels turning capture feeling, momentum
connecting past to present in a haunting way

this quiet nostalgic trail ride
opens some very special memories
rare privileged moments of a most thrilling time
when tons of metal moved through remote areas
brought people together – grew a country

you never forget the trains...
childhood memory won't let you
steam whistles – bells ringing – engines puffing
bellowing billows of black smoke
the fascination never ends

“ past neighbours
 who keep to themselves
 fatten themselves with grudges
 are not who you think.”

—Miriam Love

as I cycle round a curve on this preserved
 path
 my journey parallels iron rides of a hundred
 years
 through villages and towns along the way
 I can still see the children waving
 hear the train’s whistle answer back

at journey’s end
 I roll into the end of an era
 rest my wheels and reflect back
 on the great ride it was

Where it leads
Miriam Love

The rhino runs
 along the gray folds
 of the 401
 past small towns
 past neighbours
 who keep to themselves
 fatten themselves with grudges
 are not who you think.

Now, a boy with thin cold hands
 follows, camera strapped
 against hard breast:
 catch the beast,
 a probable tale
 a possible tale
 for a story without a father.

Dürer’s Rhinoceros –
 all scales and cloven toes
 heavy armour and horns—
 her body at odds
 with life itself,
 could not run
 like this rhino.

The boy runs faster
 farther, after his image
 above the fold
 tracking grey-horns
 and guile, lens
 bouncing on chest
 rubber soles slapping
 hard on the pavement.

The Rhino Lounge
Tom Cull

The rhino lunges,
 tin and steel,
 at angles to itself.
 The writers tighten
 the circle, closing in,
 the rhinoceros spins,
 impales a Language poet –
 he screams eeeeeeee
 and falls.
 A phalanx of novella-ists
 charge the armoured beast
 bringing her down.
 A journalist produces

**“The writers tighten
the circle, closing in,
the rhinoceros spins”**
— Tom Cull

a hacksaw from inside his
trench coat. It is passed
through the crowd,
and the sound of sawing,
bellowing, briefly turns
the heads of Saturday
commuters.

The riven horn is held aloft,
passed from hand to hand,
doused with WD40,
and sent to the smithy
who melts it down
to make mighty pens
and so the sexy
stories go.

Contributors

Jayne Archibald: a spoken word poet who frequents the London Poetry Slam and recently traveled to Vancouver for the Canadian Individual Poetry Slam and Saskatoon for the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word.

Marilyn Ashworth: loves to write and learn; both are offered at WordsFest.

Frank Beltrano: an active member of the London Ontario poetry community.

Stan Burfield: Organizer of London Open Mic Poetry Night.

Heidi Choi: a third-year English Literature student at Western University, and aspires to make a living one day from publishing my brain juice.

Joan Clayton: Playwright, historical fiction, POETRY QUEEN.

Tom Cull: lives and writes in London Ontario.

Roy Geiger: lives in London, and is a lifelong, avid reader.

Megan Gerrett: Peace and Love.

Laurie Graham: a poet and a teacher at Fanshawe.

Shelly Harder: “Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse... Almost, at times, the Fool.”

Martin Hayter: a full-time psychotherapist and part-time poet.

Aileen House: Woman in need of reminders found them.

Marlene Laplante: a great grandmother.

Miriam Love: lives in London Ontario, and teaches at King’s University College and Western University.

John Malik: Mathematics PhD, Musician.

Lincoln McCardle: a father, husband, interpretive dancer and proud Londoner.

Andy McGuire is poet and musician from Grand Bend, Ontario, and currently resides in Toronto. He is pursuing an MFA in creative writing from the University of Guelph. McGuire’s poems have appeared in *Riddle Fence*, *Hazlitt* and *The Walrus*.

Helen Ngo: addicted to cats, coffee, and calculus.

Zoe Norman: a lion tamer-cum- university student.

Ola Nowosad: a poet, teacher and member of Poetry London.

Contributors

Sara Raza: an avid poetry and start-up enthusiast studying Economics at Western University.

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Christopher Scott lives in London, where he is a practicing artist and has worked as an installation consultant and a lecturer. His works have been exhibited in galleries across Ontario.

Stefanie Tom: 18-year-old foreigner who likes to sing.

Andy Verboom: won the 2014 Winston Collins Prize, edits *The Word Hoard*, and writes at andyverboom.com.

Kym Wolfe: a freelancer who writes for a variety of magazines, I now have two books in print (*Barhopping Into History London, Ontario* and *Hopping Into History, London*).

Jennifer Zhang: a medical sciences major with an affinity for poetry.



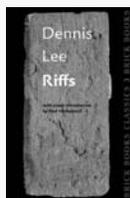
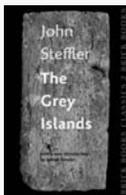
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**“This November air
Is made of soliloquies
Along Dundas Street”**
— Jennifer Zhang

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